

Inspection of a good school: Fordcombe Church of England Primary School

The Green, Fordcombe, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN3 0RY

Inspection date:

18 October 2022

Outcome

Fordcombe Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this small and happy school. The school's values of forgiveness, honesty, hope, love, perseverance and respect are central to pupils' daily experiences. They are helped to know and understand the importance of these concepts in their lives. As one pupil commented, 'The values are a guide for our behaviour.'

Staff have high expectations of how all pupils will learn in and beyond the classroom. Pupils are encouraged to work hard, and this helps them to achieve well across the curriculum. They are keen to attend different clubs, such as those for chess and choir. Older pupils relish their leadership roles, including being sports captains. They enjoy being positive role models as 'buddies' to children in Reception.

Staff help pupils to understand how they are expected to behave. Pupils are taught to recognise and manage different emotions. Staff provide effective extra help for pupils who need more support to make the right decisions. This helps pupils to behave well most of the time. Leaders address effectively any incidents of unkind behaviour and bullying, which rarely happen. Pupils are confident to ask for help from adults in school if they have a worry. They feel safe and appreciate how much staff care for them.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders prioritise pupils' wider development. Pupils are encouraged to contribute positively to their school and village community. This includes pupils acting as 'leading lights' to lead worship in school and at the local church. Staff use personal, social and health education lessons to help pupils to explore important issues, including learning about healthy relationships and how to promote their mental health.

Pupils are helped to develop a love of reading. Staff routinely read aloud books that are linked to pupils' learning, such as books about the Maya. This supports pupils to further build knowledge and deepen their understanding.

Pupils learn to read well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Children learn phonics from the beginning of Reception. Leaders ensure that all staff closely follow the school's chosen phonics scheme. Teachers routinely check how well pupils are learning. Struggling readers are provided with effective extra support to help them to keep up. Pupils read books that are accurately matched to the sounds they have learned. This helps pupils to develop confidence and fluency, which motivates them to read more at home.

In other subjects, the curriculum is mostly well sequenced. In mathematics, leaders have precisely identified what they intend pupils to learn and in what order. This enables staff to support pupils to build their knowledge and skills gradually over time. For example, in Reception, children successfully use resources to support them counting to 20. In Year 1, pupils confidently build on this by using a number line to subtract a one-digit number from a two-digit number. The curriculum in some wider subjects needs further refining. Leaders have broadly identified what they intend pupils to learn. However, this is not precise enough to support teachers to emphasise the most important content to help pupils to link new learning with what they have learned before.

Some staff have expert knowledge, for example in music, and they use this to explain new learning clearly. This helps pupils to achieve well. For example, pupils develop a strong understanding of different types of music and instruments and accurately use ambitious vocabulary to discuss different rhythms. In some subjects, staff carefully check pupils' understanding and use this information to inform their teaching, but this is not yet consistent. The curriculum is appropriately adapted for pupils with SEND. Staff identify pupils' needs swiftly and give these pupils timely support to help them achieve well.

Most subject leaders are new to their role and many teachers are responsible for more than one subject in this small school. Some subject leaders have not yet had the chance to check that planning is being closely followed or to review how well pupils are learning. Leaders have identified this as an area to strengthen.

Pupils enjoy positive attitudes to learning. Almost all pupils concentrate well in lessons. This enables them to work hard and try their best. On occasion, learning is disrupted by pupils' behaviour, but staff manage these incidents well. Pupils are respectful towards others and play happily together during playtimes.

Governors and trustees know the strengths of the school and areas that require further development. They are committed to supporting and challenging leaders, especially in their work to further strengthen the curriculum. Staff appreciate how leaders and governors are aware of their workload and they value the support and care they are given.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders provide high-quality training so that all staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Staff are alert to signs that may indicate that a child may be at risk of

harm. They report concerns swiftly and record-keeping is detailed. Leaders act on this information to ensure that pupils receive help promptly.

Staff teach pupils how to keep themselves safe, including when online and in the community. This includes learning about fire safety.

Governors visit the school to check systematically that safeguarding procedures are followed closely. This includes ensuring that the required checks are completed before adults start working or volunteering at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in some subjects is still being developed. In these subjects, it does not support pupils to build effectively on prior learning as they progress through the school. Leaders should ensure that all staff understand what key knowledge and skills pupils should learn and remember, and how best to help them use this.
- Many subject leaders are new to their role. Some subject leaders do not know how well pupils are learning in their subject. Leaders should ensure that subject leaders are supported to make sure that the curriculum is taught as intended and that pupils successfully learn the most important content.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Fordcombe Church of England Primary School, to be good in February 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	146400
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10240364
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	71
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Lady Jacqueline Evans
Headteacher	Chris Blackburn
Website	www.fordcombe.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 February 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Almost all staff have joined this school since the previous inspection.
- The chair of governors started in his role in January 2020 and all other governors have joined the school since the previous inspection.
- This school is a Church of England school in the Diocese of Rochester. Its most recent section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character took place in February 2017.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher and other school staff.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body and a group of trustees.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and music. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors spoke with staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to review their knowledge, records and actions. Inspectors also looked at safeguarding records and actions and reviewed information about the safer recruitment of staff.
- To make wider judgements, inspectors spoke to staff and groups of pupils from different year groups and observed behaviour in classrooms and at lunchtime.
- The views of staff and pupils, including responses to Ofsted's online staff survey, were considered.
- Parents' and carers' responses to Ofsted Parent View, including written comments, were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Laurie Anderson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jo Brinkley

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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